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Hart Charges Reagan 'Torpedoed' Arms Control

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SANTA BARBARA, Calif., May 19—Sen. Gary Hart (D-Colo.) charged today that President Reagan has "torpedoed the arms-control process in every conceivable way while blandly asserting" that he wants it to succeed.

In a hard-hitting speech to an overflow crowd at a downtown theater here, Hart assailed Reagan as an amiable but "uninformed" president who must bear the blame "on the American side for the recent steep slide towards nuclear war."

"Ronald Reagan has a well-deserved reputation for being a little uninformed and a little inattentive to his job," Hart said. "It is difficult to tell whether he knows what he is doing or whether he does not. It is equally difficult to say which is worse."

The speech, frequently interrupted by applause, was the clearest and most succinct statement of Hart's views on arms control and military policy since he began campaigning for the Democratic presidential nomination. It was written by retired Adm. Noel Gayler, a former head of the National Security Agency who is accompanying Hart on his swing through the West.

Warning that the danger of nuclear war is more pressing than ever, Hart said that the United States is developing nine new weapons systems, programmed to take 17,000 new nuclear warheads. The Soviets, he said, are building up accordingly.

"Each side feels threatened, and each side is threatened," Hart said. He said Soviet and U.S. policy-makers of the past 40 years share much of the blame, but he heavily faulted Reagan for the current crisis.

"He has vilified, attacked and enraged the Soviet Union from the day he came into office," Hart said. "He has incessantly built up nuclear weapons, consistently confusing them with usable military strength. He has strained the NATO alliance nearly to destruction—and the returns are not all in yet."

Hart said Reagan has put up "a smoke screen of show-business proposals intended to look good while nothing is being done."

Hart also charged that Reagan, on his recent visit to China, gave away "potentially dangerous nuclear technology" without securing safeguards against nuclear proliferation. And, he said, the Chinese made it clear that they would not join Reagan in publicly denouncing the Soviets.

Hart proposed "six major ways to reduce the risk of nuclear war," beginning with an end to "the pointless, insulting and threatening language we use against each other" and concluding with destruction of nuclear warheads "in a way that is equal, verifiable and stabilizing for both sides and for the world."

Hart said he would also end covert CIA actions and use streamlined conventional forces to keep open Western air and sea lines, to hold ground in Europe and elsewhere, to combat terrorism and "to project and sustain power at great distances, where we must, in our own self-interest." He did not elaborate.

The speech was tougher on paper than in delivery. Hart softened several passages, changing one that called Reagan "an amiable and plastic president" and to just "amiable." At no point did he mention his principal rival for the Democratic nomination, Walter F. Mondale.

Meanwhile, Mondale met at his Washington campaign headquarters today with reporters from New Jersey. Mondale questioned Reagan's leadership on environmental issues and Hart's commitment to the federal Superfund toxic-waste cleanup program.